

LOOKING TO THE NEXT 60 YEARS A PLAN TO GUIDE THE WAY **By Gail Farmer**

Imagine a Wissahickon Valley

... where nature thrives and biodiversity is protected and encouraged to flourish

...where the Wissahickon Creek is viewed as a living gem, to be protected and enjoyed

...where residents from every community can access a network of preserves and trails that will take them places they want to go - to the library, grocery store, dinner and movie - all the way to Center City

...where community members are engaged in the protection, stewardship and enjoyment of the preserves and trails where they live, and that these places become part of the fabric of their everyday lives

This may seem like a dream, but for the staff and Board of WVWA, this is our vision for the future.

With extraordinary input from our staff, board, friends, members, local government officials, and other interested individuals, over the past year we undertook an extensive strategic planning exercise that has given us a compelling vision for the future. The result is a plan that will move us forward with discipline, energy, and resources all galvanized toward our **new mission**: “inspiring and engaging diverse communities of people to protect, steward and enjoy the land and waterways of the Wissahickon Valley.”

What is different about our new mission? It continues our long tradition of protecting and stewarding open space in the watershed, but it shifts our focus to engaging residents as partners in this work, rather than simply being beneficiaries.

We have identified three interconnected initiatives key to achieving our vision and mission (see infographic below). Where these three initiatives overlap is our nexus of impact.

Moving forward, we are committed to protecting and caring for our local environment with the communities of the watershed rather than for them. This pivot is essential, because while we have long known that people need nature, what we have come to appreciate is that nature also needs people.



2017 BY THE NUMBERS

1 New Mission Statement:
We inspire and engage diverse communities of people to protect, steward and enjoy the land and waterways of the Wissahickon Valley.

200 summer campers learned about our local environment and **connected with nature.**

807 volunteers contributed **5,577** hours of work in support of our mission.

1,700 students from **10** local schools participated in our environmental education program.

5,460 people follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. **(Do you?)**

1,118 "likes" on the **Wild about the Wissahickon** social media campaign posts.

131 birds across **21** different species were studied at our MAPS Bird Banding Station at Crossways Preserve.

250 people walked through the woods to attend the first ever **Craft Beer by the Creek.**

1,806 Wild about the Wissahickon temporary tattoos and decals were given out to be **proudly displayed.**

390 native trees and shrubs were planted in the Watershed.

1,248 community members financially supported our mission through membership, annual fund donations, and designated gifts. For a complete list of donors visit wwa.org/2017donors.

13 years of Stream Monitoring & Assessment Program (MAP) data was analyzed.

421 visitors learned about historical engineering and technology at the **Evans-Mumbower Mill.**

120 corporations, foundations, and small businesses supported our work through sponsorship.

632 people support the mission of WVWA by choosing to be a part of the **membership community.** 302 have been members for 10+ years.

22 monarch butterflies were tagged to track their migration and **18** were adopted by Wissahickon Valley residents.

37 events engaged **3,759** community members in educational and recreational activities throughout the Watershed.

133 citizen scientist Creek Watchers monitored **35** sites along the Wissahickon Creek.

WE BELIEVE – PEOPLE BENEFIT WHEN NATURE THRIVES.

WISSAHICKON CLEAN WATER PARTNERSHIP

By Lindsay Blanton

In 2016, 13 of our 16 watershed municipalities and 4 wastewater treatment facilities joined together to form the Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership. This partnership of watershed stakeholders is working towards the ambitious goal of creating a holistic Water Quality Improvement Plan, expected to be complete in 2018. This plan will serve as a regulatory standard for municipalities to improve the health of the Wissahickon Creek. This level of collaboration across the watershed is an inspired new approach to making our environment healthier, together as a community.

The group met throughout 2017 to make progress towards developing this plan; utilizing a team of local and regional environmental non-profits to collect and model new data on the Wissahickon Creek, working with municipalities to identify opportunities to implement new projects, and devising feasible financing strategies.

Throughout 2017, Temple University collected an abundance of new data on the Creek and its tributaries in an effort to better understand the underlying problems and their solutions. In 2018, this new data will be analyzed and strategies for the Water Quality Improvement Plan will be discussed with the Partnership group.

WVWA has been working to share with our members, friends, and watershed stakeholders the exciting progress of the Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership. As part of this effort, this fall we launched a campaign to highlight why our community values the Wissahickon Creek. We asked, “Why are you ‘Wild About the Wissahickon?’” and you answered! From connecting with nature, to spending time with friends and family on the trails, to taking in the beautiful wildlife our watershed has to offer, it is clear that our community truly is “Wild About the Wissahickon”! To learn more about the WCWP visit: wwva.org/cleanwater.



Do you have your Wild About the Wissahickon sticker yet? Stop by the barn to grab one!



Visit our Facebook page to watch the Wild About the Wissahickon videos!

MEET OUR NEW ENGAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

By Jenn Bilger



Serve the Preserve

With an exciting and fresh path blazed by our new strategic plan, an Engagement Department is born! This new department, led by Jenn Bilger, will include our education, outreach, and volunteer service programs. Other staff in this department include Gina Craig, Lindsay Blanton, Kristy Morley, and David Froehlich.

WVWA believes people benefit when nature thrives and our goal is to empower residents of the watershed to protect, steward, and enjoy their local preserves, trails, and waterways.

Opportunities to engage take many shapes at WVWA. We offer service projects such as planting trees and cleaning up the creek. We partner with local camps and afterschool programs; involve people in citizen science activities such as studying birds, monitoring stream health and tagging monarch butterflies; host events like Walk the Wissahickon, the Tex Mex 5k, and Craft Beer by the Creek; and teach people how to explore the relationship between nature and

technological advancements at our historic Evans-Mumbower Mill. With this reorganization, staff will be working together to connect the many ways that people engage with the Wissahickon.

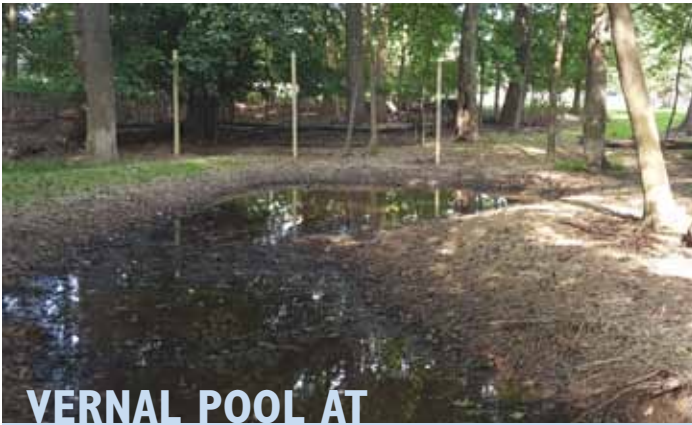


David Freed

Monarch Butterfly tagging

You can help us with our engagement efforts by inviting a friend or neighbor to join you whenever you attend one of our programs and events. Together, we can be a force FOR nature!

UNDER CONSTRUCTION



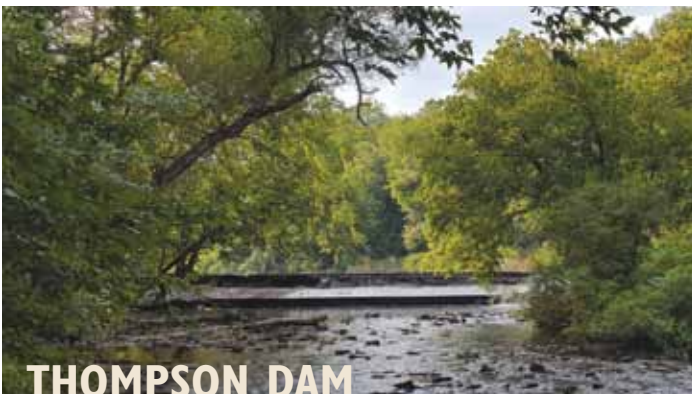
VERNAL POOL AT CROSSWAYS PRESERVE

In July, a 40' x 60' vernal pool was constructed in the forest at Crossways Preserve to create additional water resources for wildlife – especially reptiles and amphibians dependent on this particular form of seasonally wet habitat. The pool was fenced-in with the help of volunteers from Janssen to protect new plant growth from deer predation, and will be monitored throughout the year. In the spring, additional or missing species will be planted with the goal of increasing biodiversity. The pool is located in sensitive forest habitat and is therefore not open to the public, but may be used in future educational programming.



STEPPING STONES REPLACED

This past summer two stepping stones near Germantown Academy/Morris Road were washed out and then replaced. We were amazed at the overwhelming response we received from trail users notifying us of the issue and the “thanks” that we received after fixing them. We are lucky to be a part of such an enthusiastic and involved community!



THOMPSON DAM ASSESSMENT FUNDED

WVWA has been awarded a Growing Greener Grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. The grant will be used to study and develop a long-term plan for the Thompson Dam, which is located in the Wissahickon Creek in Whitpain Township just upstream of Mt. Pleasant Avenue. The dam was built in the early 1800s and is falling apart. It is important to note that this funding isn't to remove the dam, it will be used to thoroughly assess all possible options for remedying the issues caused by the failing structure.



MILL WALL REPAIR

By Mark Smith, Volunteer

“It’s worse than we thought,” were some of the first words uttered by the volunteers who undertook repairing the stone wall protecting the Evans-Mumbower Mill from the Wissahickon Creek. Decades of flood damage, deterioration and root intrusion had seriously compromised the integrity of the wall. In order to do a lasting job, the entire wall needed to be power washed to clear algae and debris, then ingrown roots and loose joint material were removed. After this preparatory work, the wall face was filled with new stone and mortar and missing capstones were replaced. To top off the project, a new creek-depth gauge was installed. A big thank you goes to Mark Smith, Duane Deaner, Stan Barnett, Steve Blubaugh, Dan DiLanzo, Scott Boyce and Keith Bance, who volunteered a combined 227 hours from April to October 2017 to fix the wall.

Stan Barnett

BLACKSMITH SHOP DEBUTS AT THE EVANS-MUMBOWER MILL

By David Froehlich

Water splashing over the waterwheel, the rumble of spinning gears, the swish of flour sliding down shoots have all been familiar sounds for visitors to Evans-Mumbower Mill. Now the smell of smoke, the crackle of a burning fire and the clang of a hammer striking red-hot iron will also be part of the experience. Why? Because the mill now has a blacksmith shop.

Like millers, blacksmiths were essential members of 18th and 19th century communities. While we associate them with horseshoes, smithies fabricated everything from kitchen utensils to hinges to door latches to hand tools. WVWA's new acquisition goes beyond the basic forge and anvil. Acquired from Ray Zelaney, a resident of Maryland, the structure is a working reproduction of a blacksmith's shop with displays of blacksmithing equipment and examples of some of the products made by these craftsmen.

Blacksmithing demonstrations are expected to be frequent features of mill open house days, but may not always be part of the event. Check with the WVWA office or website in the spring and summer to see when the shop will be in operation.



Longfellow once wrote "Under a spreading chestnut tree/The village smithy stands/The smith, a mighty man is he/With large and sinewy hands..." The mill's volunteer smithy is John Weiskopf and visitors will immediately see that he lives up to that description.

David Freed

CROSSWAYS TRAIL CONNECTION

By Scott Berman

In November of 2017, the Crossways Bridge and Trail was honored by the Montgomery County Planning Commission with the Montgomery Award for excellence in sustainable design. The trail was made possible by a partnership among Whitpain and Lower Gwynedd Townships, Montgomery County Community College (MCCC), the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Montgomery County, and local conservation champion, Saly A. Glassman.

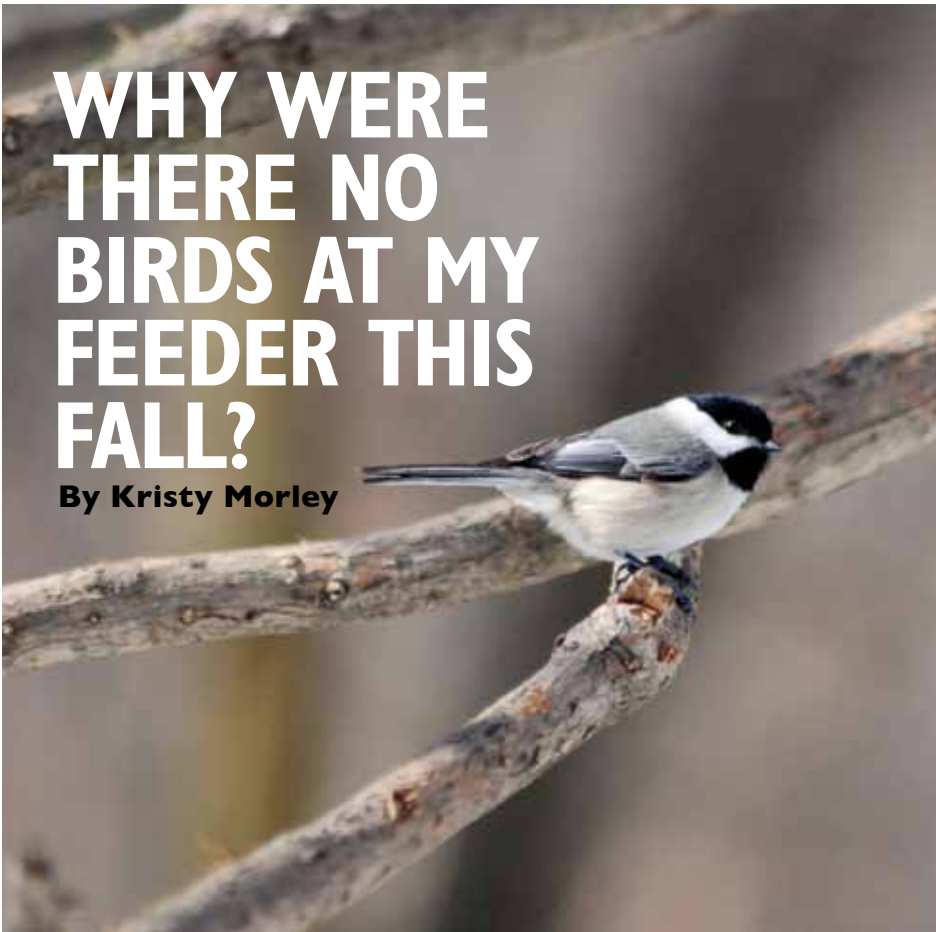
The 1.3-mile, multi-use trail, completed in December 2016, was added to our Crossways Preserve, providing a connection from MCCC in Whitpain Township to Penllyn Woods and the Green Ribbon Trail in Lower Gwynedd Township. The trail travels through the preserved fields and woodlands of our Crossways Preserve. Parking is available on Cathcart Road and the trail is multi-use and ADA accessible, providing wonderful opportunities to connect with nature through walking, running, bicycling, and horseback riding. Signs at Crossways provide route guidance, and an interactive map is available on our website.



David Freed

WHY WERE THERE NO BIRDS AT MY FEEDER THIS FALL?

By Kristy Morley



With the frigid temperatures of late December and snows in January, most people's bird feeders are probably overrun with birds at the moment, but this was a common question that we heard at WVWA this fall. There were several reasons for the declines in feeder birds, including abundant wild food, unusually warm weather, and a catch-22.

This past fall saw very high production of seeds from several tree species including white pines, oaks and spruces. This high production of seeds, coupled with warm fall temperatures which allowed higher levels of insect activity, kept the birds away from our feeders. Birds will choose natural sources of food over the supplemental food we provide in our feeders every time!

The catch-22? Lower levels of bird activity mean a higher likelihood that the food in our feeders will go bad. Birds will avoid wet, moldy and stale foods. The fix: dump the spoiled food, wash feeders with soap and water. Rinse in a solution of 1-part bleach to 9 parts water and refill only partially until activity picks up. Happy feeding!

BUTTERFLY WINTER SURVIVAL STRATEGIES By Kristy Morley



Common Buckeye



Monarch



Eastern Comma

It seems strange with the snow coming down outside to be writing of butterflies, but these bright little gems of summer are all around us, even in the depths of winter. Butterflies employ a variety of strategies to survive the winter. Some, like the Monarch and Common Buckeye migrate to warmer areas, and their children or grandchildren fly back north the following summer. A large number of Pennsylvania's butterflies, such as Cabbage White and Common Wood Nymph, pause their development and overwinter in leaf litter or brush piles as caterpillars or even eggs. These are

the butterflies that we will see soon after warmer days arrive. Three species of butterflies overwinter here as adult butterflies, Mourning Cloak, Eastern Comma, and Question Mark. These butterflies seek out a dry, dark crevice as the temperatures drop. They can be found in hollow logs, wood piles, even garages! Hibernating adults produce glycerols that act as an "antifreeze" in their blood. These are the first butterflies of spring, often emerging on warm days as early as February to feed on sap running from trees.

Jamie Stewart



CONSTRUCTION ON PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE AT PISZEK PRESERVE

By Madalyn Neff

The Pennsylvania Avenue Bridge over the Sandy Run at WVWA's Piszek Preserve in Springfield Township is scheduled to be replaced beginning in February and lasting until December 2018.

This bridge replacement is part of the Rapid Bridge Replacement Project, which is an \$899 million public-private partnership between PennDOT and Plenary Walsh Keystone Partners (PWKP) to replace 558 structurally deficient bridges throughout the state – five of which are in Montgomery County.

In addition to their commitment to public safety and roadway safety, PennDOT has also demonstrated a commitment to ensuring that protection of the stream and riparian zone is incorporated into their project plans. Rory McGlasson, Public Information Coordinator for Walsh Granite, said, "PWKP, PennDOT and local stakeholders have worked hard together during the design phases of the PA Avenue project. Thanks to valuable input received from WVWA during public participation process, we have been able to make final decisions that reduce the environmental impact, provide a design sensitive to its historic surroundings, and minimize the impact the construction project will have on the

traveling public in the Springfield-Upper Dublin area. While the construction activity will have a temporary impact on the surrounding area, we are certain the project will provide a permanent improvement."

This necessary construction will mean unavoidable changes at Piszek Preserve including a temporary road, with a separate detour for tractor-trailers, and the removal of trees. "Once construction is complete, WVWA will fully restore the riparian zone and protect the creek. We came to an agreement with PennDOT that provides financial support, which allows us to complete the restoration project ourselves. This gives us the opportunity to design and implement a plan that is best for the Preserve," said John Ferro, WVWA Director of Conservation.

The Piszek Preserve is 36-acres and comprised of woodlands and meadows along the flood-prone Sandy Run. Conservation of the land ensures perpetual protection of more than 1,000 feet of riparian buffer, which helps slow and re-absorb floodwaters. The property was preserved with the help of the Piszek family, Copernicus Society, Montgomery Lands Trust, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Alan Gnessin.

OUR MISSION

We inspire and engage diverse communities of people to protect, steward and enjoy the land and waterways of the Wissahickon Valley.

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2018 BIENNIAL WISSAHICKON PHOTO CONTEST



Best in Show 2016- Tom Lo. "Fantasy Walkway"

Get those cameras ready! Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association (WVWA) and the Friends of the Wissahickon are once again teaming up to present the 2018 Biennial Wissahickon Photo Contest. All photos entered in the contest must be taken within Wissahickon Valley Park, along the Green Ribbon Trail, or on one of the WVWA-managed preserves. You can submit photos that have been taken within the past three years. Categories include: Best in Show, Landscape, People, Structures, Wildlife, Junior Submission and People's Choice. Please read detailed submission rules at wwa.org/2018photocontest.

**Photo contest opens
April 2, 2018.
The deadline for submissions
is October 15, 2018.**